

the medical health program, and that really removes part of my objection to proceeding on this bill. Without this bill, the Department of Defense and Veterans Affairs have to contend with this continuing resolution. Most people do not understand it. It means these moneys will be postponed until mid-February, the additional moneys that are necessary to meet the additional demands being placed on our Armed Services before September 30. We are supposed to finish this bill by September 30.

I am told the Department of Defense will not be able to start a single military construction project, although those projects were authorized more than 3 months ago. It means the projects cannot be started until the regular bill is passed. I hope it will be passed in February.

Now, I took the time to go to Italy and look at the new Army base there and the new Air Force base there, as we are redeploying our forces from Germany and other places into Italy. Those projects involve barracks, quality of life facilities, and family housing. That cannot go forward. The money will not be available because it was not covered by the 2006 appropriations bill. It is not covered by this continuing resolution.

I think it is true now, because of what I mentioned, the Veterans' Administration should be able to sustain the medical care for our veterans without disruption. But I can tell the Senate, they will not be able to go much more than mid-February without running into real trouble. So one of the first bills that ought to be considered when we get back is the Veterans appropriations bill.

I am here tonight because I announced to our conference I would oppose this CR unless it contained these bills in it. After consulting, and my staff consulting, with the Department of Defense, the Veterans' Administration, and understanding what the House has done now since that time on the medical portion for the Veterans' Administration, it does not seem possible for me to do that now. All I can do is express my deep reservation about voting for this bill under the circumstances.

We should have had at least the balance of the military money and the veterans money made available by this Congress before we went home. And I am really disappointed it is not possible.

Mr. President, I say to the Senator from Texas, you wish the floor again? The Senator from Ohio would follow me, but you wish to comment?

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I would just like to clarify, with the Senator from Alaska on this subject, that the Senate did act. The Senate did pass our bill, and we did appoint conferees, and it was a lack of willingness on the part of the House to have conferees meet with the Senate. His dis-appointment is the same as mine.

I am going to start working on January 4, when we are sworn in to the new Congress. And I hope we can take the bill that has been passed unanimously by the Senate and work through the appropriations process and pass this bill before the continuing resolution is ended on February 15. We do not have to wait until February 15. And once the committee is constituted, and we have a chairman and a ranking member, I will be the ranking member, and I will work with the chairman. And I hope we can pass this bill because it is in very good order and it was unanimously supported by the Senate. And I think we are pretty close to what the House passed. I think, with a strong will, we will be able to come in before February 15 and start those projects about which the Senator from Alaska just spoke.

So I will look forward to working with him in the new year, both for Defense appropriations and for this Military Construction bill and the Veterans Affairs bill and the military quality of life that is in the bill that we passed in the Senate earlier this year.

I thank the Senator.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Texas for those comments.

My point is, the Congress as a whole should have finished its job. We should have done this job before this Congress ends, particularly for those bills which impact the men and women in our Armed Services, their families, and the veterans who have served, particularly the new class of veterans now who are coming out of the service, many of whom are wounded. Many of them have readjustment problems. This bill, the bill the Senator from Texas and her subcommittee prepared, would have answered many of those problems. It would have made money available now to deal with them.

I am chagrined that bill is not going to pass. I think it is a failure of this Congress. And we ought to admit it is a failure. But as far as this Senator is concerned, we have done everything we can to try to rectify that. It is just not possible to get the Congress to vote. The House has already voted. I do not think it is possible for us to try to amend this bill now. And I am told the agencies involved have reviewed it and say they will find a way to continue their work until February without it.

That does not answer the question to me though because the things they should start now would be well underway by February, and it will not be possible with postponing this bill. It is a tragedy we are not able to complete our appropriations process, in my opinion.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

#### HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

JERKO "JERRY" ZOVKO

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I rise this evening to pay tribute to Jerko

Zovko, a civilian contractor from Cleveland, who was killed on March 31, 2004, while doing his security work in Iraq.

Jerko—or "Jerry," as he was known by his family and friends—could be described as many things. He was a family man who maintained a close relationship with his parents, brother, and others in his Croatian community outside Cleveland. He was extremely bright, being fluent in five languages. He was extraordinarily brave, having served as an elite Army Ranger in Bosnia and Kuwait and then as a private security agent in Iraq.

Perhaps best described by his mother, Danica, "Jerry was a man with a principle and ideals. . . . He loved people. He wanted the world to be without borders, for everyone to be free and safe." Jerry gave his life for what he believed in, for a people who he thought deserved their freedom.

Born in Cleveland and raised in Euclid, OH, Jerry and his younger brother Tom cultivated their Croatian heritage through their tight-knit family and community. Jerry attended St. Christine School and then Euclid High School, where he played soccer. In his free time, he worked with his father at the family auto body shop. Known as a skinny kid growing up, no one could have predicted that he would grow into the hulking military man as his family lovingly described him.

Following high school, Jerry went to Ohio State University with the intention of becoming a doctor. However, his aspirations changed after a life-altering trip to his family's homeland of Croatia when the country was achieving its independence from the former Yugoslavia. Jerry predicted correctly that conflict was about to erupt in his family's homeland, and he wanted to be ready. He returned to the United States and enlisted in the Army when he was 19 years old.

Jerry was dedicated to the idea of universal freedom and he lived his life in pursuit of that goal. Jerry spent 8 years in the Army as a member of the elite Army Rangers and served mostly overseas, including in Bosnia and Kuwait. His personality shone through in whatever he did. Army buddies remembered with fondness how Jerry built a swimming pool on the roof of the barracks and how he would zip around the base on a motorcycle with a sidecar.

Not wanting to worry his family, Jerry used to tell his parents that he never saw combat because he was "just a cook." Though he knew his parents constantly feared for his safety, Jerry continued to risk his life for the good of others.

After being discharged as a Sergeant from the Army in 2001, Jerry joined Blackwater Security—a private security company—and worked for some time in Dubai. Jerry then decided that the Iraqi people needed his help. His family pleaded with him not to go, but in their hearts they knew that Jerry would do what he believed was right.

His brother Tom recalled Jerry's independent streak and that no one could stop him from doing what he set out to do. His mother remembered a talk they had before Jerry left in which he told her that he was needed in Iraq and that we all need to support our troops and stay united.

While working in Iraq, the newly freed people were Jerry's first priority. He started to learn and speak Arabic, because as he said, he wanted to help the Iraqis and he wanted to do it on their terms. Jerry worked in a number of hotspots in Iraq and never shied away from a tough job.

Jerry eventually lost his life while guarding a food truck in Fallujah. Like the way he lived his life, Jerry lost his in the service of others.

I had the privilege of attending the calling hours for Jerry and am grateful for the chance to talk to Jerry's family about their son, brother, and friend. I thank them for sharing their memories with me.

We will never forget Jerry Zovko. It became apparent, in talking with his family, that Jerry will forever live on in the hearts and minds of his parents Danica and Jozo and his brother Tom. Jerry touched the lives of everyone he met, whether they were family, members of the Croatian community, Army buddies, or people living on the other side of the world.

May we all remember this great American hero.

My wife Fran and I continue to keep his family in our thoughts and in our prayers.

Mr. President, since February 2002, I have come to this floor to honor and to remember the brave Ohio men and women who have died fighting for our country in Iraq and Afghanistan. It has been my very sad duty to give 153 of those speeches.

These courageous servicemembers—with the many faces of Ohio, the many faces of America—came from the smallest villages in our State and came from the largest cities. Some came from our farms. Some were born in Ohio and in America. But others were born in foreign lands far away. Some were 18 or 19 years old. Some were in their forties. Some were privates and lance corporals, while one was a lieutenant colonel. Some joined the military as a result of the September 11 attacks, while others planned on a career in the military from their youngest days, marching around as small children in their fathers' uniforms.

Some, Mr. President, Members of the Senate, had seen a lot out of life, while for others—most of them, really—their lives had just begun. All of them, though, shared something in common. All of them changed lives in countless ways, leaving enormous impacts on their families and their friends and their loved ones. Their absence leaves a gaping hole in the lives of those left behind. And while that makes it very hard, we also know that the world is a better place because these brave men

and women were a part of it. It is a better place because they lived.

We are all so very fortunate to have had them in our lives for the all-too-brief time that we did. And for that, we are eternally grateful. We, as citizens, will never be able to repay these Ohioans for their service. We know when we lose a servicemember there is, as Ronald Reagan said, a tear in the fabric that holds us all, holds us all as Americans, and holds us together, and that there is really no way to repair it.

President Theodore Roosevelt perhaps put it best when he said:

Their blood and their toil, their endurance and patriotism, have made us and all who come after us forever their debtors.

We are, indeed, in their debt.

As John F. Kennedy once said:

A Nation reveals itself not only by the men [and women] it produces, but also by the men [and women] it honors [and] remembers.

That is exactly what I have tried to do these past few years, speaking about these brave and courageous Ohioans. It is about honoring and remembering each of these truly unique, wonderful souls. Our Nation is proud of them. They lived their lives well, with great purpose and commitment and love of family and country. And for that, we will never forget them.

I would say to the families of those who have died in Iraq, Afghanistan, training exercises, service to our country, that I will remember them and I will think about them until the day I die.

#### APPRECIATION TO SENATE COLLEAGUES AND STAFF

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, early on Thanksgiving day, Mary Frances Darling was born. She is our 10th grandchild and the 6th child of our daughter Jill and her husband Bill. As I said on election night this year, I am a very lucky man. I am blessed with a wonderful family.

I am also blessed because for the last 30 years—30 years—the people of Ohio have given me the opportunity to represent them, first as Green County prosecuting attorney, then as State senator, then as a Congressman for four terms from the seventh congressional district, then Lieutenant Governor, and now, for the past 12 years, in this wonderful body as a U.S. Senator. For that opportunity, I will be eternally grateful.

When I came to the Senate in 1995, it had been a little over a year since our daughter Becky had been killed. I was, quite candidly, still numb. We as a family had been through a lot. But I knew that our time here on Earth is short, and I wanted as best I could to spend my time in the Senate, whatever time I had, working on tangible things, getting concrete results that impact the lives of families in Ohio and in our Nation. I have tried to do that, but I have not done it alone. Whatever I have achieved has been with the help of so many people.

Over the past 12 years, I have worked with every Member of this Senate, and I consider each Member of this Senate a friend. I have had the privilege to work with two Republican leaders and one who in January will become the Republican leader.

TRENT and Tricia LOTT were two of the first people Fran and I met when we came to the House in 1983. Tricia is Fran's best friend here in Washington, and TRENT is my dear friend. I have benefited from his counsel, from his advice, and from his help, now for well over 20 years.

BILL FRIST and I came to the Senate together in 1995. Karyn and BILL are very good friends. BILL has been an unbelievably accessible leader. We share a passion for fighting the spread of AIDS. BILL's public role in that cause is obvious and apparent to everyone. But what is not so obvious and what is little known is what BILL FRIST has done behind the scenes, what his role has been in working with so many people, working with the White House and others to get this job done. No one has played a bigger role. And when the history is written, BILL FRIST's name will be there in bold print as someone who has saved so many, many lives.

MITCH MCCONNELL. MITCH and Elaine are dear friends. When I faced the tough challenge of getting a bill or amendment passed, I went to MITCH. I have done it for 12 years. I did it as recently as yesterday. MITCH MCCONNELL is tough. He is strong. He is wise. He will be a great leader. His advice as to how to thread the legislative needle is responsible for so much of what I have passed. He also has a big heart, as was demonstrated time and time again when I would go to him. He is chairman of the Foreign Operations Subcommittee. After I talked to him, he would, at my request, put money into things which saved children's lives, child survival or to save little children, little babies in Haiti. He did it. He got it done. He made a difference.

I have been lucky enough to serve on the Judiciary, Appropriations, HELP, and Intelligence Committees, and I want to thank the chairmen who have led those committees over the past 12 years. I was the first Ohio Senator to serve on the Appropriations Committee since 1945. With the help of Chairman STEVENS, Chairman COCHRAN, and their staffs, I was able to secure well over \$1 billion for projects throughout Ohio that make a difference.

I particularly thank ARLEN SPECTER. I thank his clerk and my good friend, Bettilou Taylor. They have both been so helpful to me in securing millions of dollars for programs through Labor-HHS appropriations. These two dedicated public servants helped me provide funding for important programs, things such as the Children's Hospital Graduate Medical Education Program and projects in Ohio to build facilities and provide services for people with disabilities. They also helped me fund projects to help meet the health needs